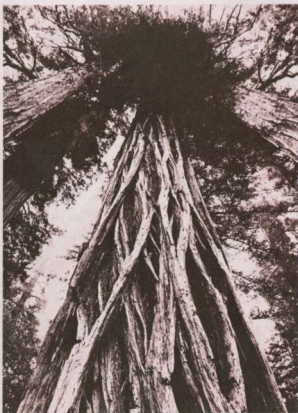


# BIG BASIN REDWOODS

## State Park Map



*Photo by Alexander Lowry*





# "THESE MIGHTY TREES . . . belong to the silences and the milleniums."

EDWIN MARKHAM

## ANCIENT FOREST

Text by Jennie Verardo  
April, 1985

Although many of the redwoods in Big Basin have seen 1500 summers or more, they have probably known human visits for less than 1000 years. The forests and basins were most likely not inhabited by native Americans but were passed through during trips to the sea or to the interior valleys. The reasons for this were significant. The Indians regarded redwood trees with a great deal of respect and religious superstition. To live among these trees would be tantamount to our taking up residence in a cathedral or synagogue. Another major deterrent to Indian settlement was that grizzly bears resided in the forested areas of Big Basin. Not wishing to risk life or limb, the Indians quite sensibly settled outside the basin areas. Evidence of the abundance of tan oak acorns and other fruits and berries, and of small game would suggest that the Indians probably visited here fairly frequently to gather food though.

It wasn't until 1769 that Europeans "discovered" the redwoods. In October of that year, the Portola expedition which was exploring up the coast of California, first noted the redwood or "palo Colorado" about forty miles south of Big Basin. These Spaniards declared them to be the "thickest, tallest, and straightest trees they had ever seen." On October 20, 1769, the party camped at the mouth of the present-day Waddell Creek. Many of the group had been ill, but by the end of their stay, all had miraculously recovered. They named the valley "Cañada de la Salud," ("Canyon of Health"), and it is now known as the Rancho del Oso section of Big Basin State Park.

## TIMBER!

The Santa Cruz Mountains remained relatively unchanged from the time of the Portola expedition until the building boom caused by the Gold Rush created both an increasing demand for lumber and an interest in the standing timber in the region. In 1862, William Waddell established a lumber mill at the confluence of the east and west fork of Waddell Creek in the valley once called "La Salud." Lumbering in the area increased to the point that by 1884, there were twenty-eight sawmills in the Big Basin-Santa Lorenzo Valley region, cutting 34,000,000 board feet of lumber per year, plus vast quantities of shingles, shakes, posts, railroad ties and cord wood. While timber companies were working their way up to the Big Basin itself, tan oak bark strippers were already at work there. One ambitious bark stripper took as much as 2000 cords of tan bark a year out of the Basin down to the tannery in Santa Cruz. The tannin extracted from the bark was an essential ingredient in the leather tanning process. One of these bark strippers actually homesteaded inside the Big Basin. Tom Maddock moved his wife and children into the Basin in 1877 and in 1882 filed a homestead claim to the land. Maddock obtained 160 acres of virgin redwood forest for the filing fee of \$7.50. From a single tree he and his 11-year old son built a cabin which the family lived in for several years with little or no regular contact with the outside world. Maddock continued to work stripping bark, leaving his wife and oldest son to hunt, gather fish and fend off the ever-present grizzly bears. The family moved down into civilization before the Basin became a park, but the site of their cabin may still be seen.

## SAVE THE REDWOODS!

In the late 19th century, as lumbermen were poised to enter the Big Basin there were isolated voices of protest against the total destruction of the virgin redwood forests, but none were successful in creating a movement—until 1899. In that year, Andrew Hill, a San Jose artist and photographer was commissioned to take photographs of redwoods for an English magazine. He traveled to the Big Trees Grove in Felton which at that time was privately

"These mighty trees belong to the silences and the milleniums. They seem indeed to be forms of immortality, standing here among the transitory shapes of time"

Edwin Markham

owned and was considered to have the largest specimens of redwoods in the Coastal Range. Hill paid an admission fee and took his photographs, but before he could leave, he was accosted by the grove's owner, Mr. Welsh. Welsh informed Hill that no photographs of the redwoods were allowed to be taken by any outsider and demanded that Hill surrender his photographic plates. Hill refused and left in his own words "a little angry, and somewhat disgusted." The thought flashed through my mind that these trees, because of their size and antiquity, were among the wonders of the world and should be saved for posterity. I said to myself, "I will start a campaign immediately to make a public park out of this place." On May 1, 1900, a meeting, attended by respected educators and community leaders, was held at Stanford University. At this meeting Big Basin was first proposed as the site for the new park. An exploring party, which included Mr. Hill, was selected to visit the area and report back to the group. They traveled to the Basin a few weeks later and were so impressed by what they saw that before they left, they organized a group to work towards making Big Basin a public park. On May 19, 1900, the Semperverns Club was formed at the party's camp at the base of Slippery Rock. A plaque there commemorates the group's founding and its ultimate hard-won success. It took almost a year of intense campaigning before the bill creating the California Redwood Park in the Big Basin was signed by Governor Gage. Andrew Hill was instrumental in the creation of the first state park in California, but he did not act alone. Father Robert Kenna of the University of Santa Clara played a key role in the acquisition, including securing the \$50,000 needed for the option on the land. Father Kenna remained active in park affairs until his death, serving for a time as Park Commissioner. Carrie Stevens Walter of San Jose and Josephine

Clifford McCracken of Santa Cruz were both responsible for eliciting public support for the park. Mrs. Walter served as the first secretary of the Club, while Mrs. McCracken is credited with having first declared what would be the movement's rallying cry "Save the Redwoods." These and other members and supporters of the Club are memorialized today with the Founders' Grove near Park Headquarters.

## " . . . TO BE PRESERVED IN A STATE OF NATURE . . ."

By 1902, California did indeed have its state park. The State purchased 2500 acres of virgin redwood from the Big Basin Lumber Company and its owner, H.L. Middleton donated an additional 1300 acres of surrounding land. A wooden, J.H.B. Pilkington of Boulder Creek, was appointed and preparations were begun to open the new California Redwood Park to the public. But, before this could be accomplished, a fire broke out at a sawmill near Waterman Gap and by the time that it was extinguished ten days later, it had burned over all of the new park except the present Redwood Trail area. This was in September, 1904, and it would take until 1911 for the park to completely recover.

In 1927, the California Legislature created the State Park System and the park was renamed Big Basin Redwoods State Park. The 1920's, '30's, '40's and '50's could be considered quiet years for Big Basin. There had been a small resort developed in the present Headquarters area, then called Governor's Camp. The Big Basin Inn offered accommodations in nearby cabins, a restaurant, general merchandise store, photographic studio, barber shop and gas station. There were also a post office, swimming and boating areas, tennis courts and a dance floor. Campsites could be rented for \$0.50 per night in 1927. During the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps had a company assigned to Big Basin. Many of the park buildings, facilities, and trails were constructed by the CCC. The automobile became a popular means of travel during these years and visitation increased tremendously. By 1955, Big Basin State Park had grown to triple its original size encompassing 10,000 acres. These seem to have been good and comfortable times for the park. That would all change.

## NOW! . . . FOR TOMORROW

In 1968, developers were poised on Mt. McCabe, the geographic center of the park. The land owners had offered 320 acres to the State, but unfortunately the State was financially unable to meet their terms. A development was planned whose entrance road would pass through a campground and which would forever scar the park. The Semperverns Club had become inactive, so a new group led by conservationist, Claude A. "Tony" Look and photographer Howard King formed along the lines of the old Club, calling themselves the Semperverns Fund. Their "May Day Campaign" was successful not only in saving the threatened section of Mt. McCabe, but in establishing a conservation group which has become instrumental in securing endangered parcels for the parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Through the untiring efforts of the Semperverns Fund headquartered in Los Altos, generous donations by the Save-the-Redwoods League and matching State Funds, Big Basin Redwoods has grown to over 19,000 acres, preserving some of the most pristine virgin redwoods in the world.

Still, California's first state park is not complete. The Semperverns Fund, working very closely with the Department of Parks and Recreation, has as its goal acquisition of the remaining privately-held parcels. Securing the complete watershed of the Big Basin will insure the park's integrity and guarantee its preservation not only for the present, but also for tomorrow.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

MOUNTAIN PARKS FOUNDATION  
525 N. Big Trees Park Road  
Felton, CA 95018  
(408) 335-3174

## THE BIG BASIN

Big Basin Redwoods State Park, located in Santa Cruz County about 23 miles north-east of the city of Santa Cruz, is not in a true basin. Formed millions of years ago by the uplifting of its circular rim and the eroding of its center by stream action, this bowl-like depression in the Santa Cruz Mountains has as its only outlets the forks of the Waddell Creek, which have cut deep gorges in the rim. The climate in the Basin is moderate with summer fog in the early morning and an occasional winter snowstorm adding interest. It is the ideal climate for redwoods.

## PLANT COMMUNITIES OF BIG BASIN

### THE REDWOOD FOREST

Sequoia sempervirens is an ancient species, thought to have covered much of the Northern Hemisphere at one time, but now confined to a narrow coastal strip which extends from the Monterey-San Luis Obispo county line on the south to some 14 miles north of the California-Oregon border. This strip corresponds to the coastal fog belt on whose moisture these giants depend. "Semperverns" means ever-living and the redwoods have no major enemies except intense fire and saw-blades. One of the most impressive stands of virgin redwoods in the park is located on the Redwood Nature Trail. A descriptive guide to these trees may be obtained at park headquarters. Accompanying the redwoods in this type of community are Douglas fir, tan oak, California laurel, and wax myrtle trees. While the towering height of the redwoods, which may reach over 300 feet, shades out most understory shrubs, huckleberry, western azalea and several varieties of ferns are able to thrive in all but the most dense stands. Many varieties of wild flowers are evident in the redwoods during the spring. These include redwood sorrel, salal, wild ginger, trillium, redwood violet and milk maids. Several varieties of wild orchid, while rare, are also found in the Big Basin. In fall and early winter, the redwoods are a fungi-lover's paradise. A unique feature of redwoods will become apparent during even a short walk among them. Craters, sometimes involving as many as 10 or 12 trees in a circle surrounding a sunken spot or stump, are one of the chief methods of reproduction of the redwoods. Like youngsters circling a fallen hero, these shoots will not have the space to reach

the magnitude of their predecessor, but they do provide continuation of the species and a protected area in the crater where fungi as well as small animals and birds can flourish.

### MIXED EVERGREEN COMMUNITY

Acting as a transition between the redwood community and the chaparral of the drier, higher locations, the mixed evergreen community is composed generally of close stands whose trees may reach 100 feet. They include madrone, coast live oak, California hazel, tan oak and Douglas fir. These areas of moist forest floor and intermittent islands of grass support an abundant and diverse assortment of flowering plants. Ceanothus or California wild lilac, Douglas' iris, hound's tongue, Indian warrior, Henderson's shooting star, and two-eyed violets are but a few of this community's wildflower gems.

### CHAPARRAL COMMUNITY

Commonly found on south-facing slopes and dry, rocky ridges above the cloud layer, the chaparral community presents a stark contrast to the redwoods. The plants of the chaparral are densely-growing, non-yielding types of vegetation, mostly 3-7 feet tall. Toyon, coffeeberry, ceanothus, manzanita, chaparral pea, coyote bush and chamise are all well adapted to the drought conditions that occur there. Knob-cone pines, chinquapin, and buchevite provide the taller cover. Common chaparral wildflowers—the monkey flower, Indian paintbrush, California fuchsia, bush poppy and yerba santa—add color.

### RIPARIAN OR STREAMSIDE VEGETATION

This community is actually a variation of the redwood forest community. It also contains more moisture-loving plants such as elk clover, western coltsfoot, horsetail, and five-finger fern along with bigleaf maple and red alder trees. Along the lower reaches of the Waddell, where the Douglas fir forest has ended, the streamside vegetation is dominated by willow, instead of alder.

### MARSHLAND

Near the mouth of Waddell Creek, in the Rancho del Oso section of the park, is the Theodore I. Hoover Natural Preserve. It is a freshwater marsh and is one of the few relatively undisturbed bodies of fresh water left along the coast.

All plants are protected in Big Basin State Park and no gathering of any plant material is allowed. This is necessary to protect this area for future generations.

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## WILDLIFE

### MAMMALS - REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Black-tailed deer, gray squirrels, chipmunks and raccoons are probably the most common mammals that the park visitor might see. All may seem quite tame but they are wild animals and will respond accordingly. Less noticeable are skunks, opossum, bobcats, foxes, coyotes and mountain lion. There are no longer grizzly bears in Big Basin, however. The last sighting was in the late 1800's.

While there are few fish in the streams, this area is alive with reptiles and amphibians. Big Basin is home to the California newt, Pacific giant salamander, Pacific tree frog,



Chipmunk

the western skink and the western toad. Western fence-lizards and alligator lizards are also residents. The rattlesnake is the only poisonous snake in Big Basin and is usually found in the drier chaparral regions. California garter snakes, coast mountain kingsnakes, gopher snakes, Pacific ring-necked snakes and rubber boas would all probably be missed by visitors, because of their shyness.

All of the animals in the park are protected. Please try to disturb them as little as possible. Since their normal diet does not include processed "people food", visitors are asked not to feed any of the animals. You may be unintentionally harming them.

### BIRDS

Big Basin's bird life is rich and diverse. In the redwoods, visitors will find the ever-present Stellar's jay, the vibrant and noisy acorn woodpecker and the dark-eyed junco. Less obvious are the brown creeper, the California quail, the flickers, and the water ouzel. Big Basin was the location of the first sighting of a nest of the marbled murrelet, a web-footed shorebird which nests 200 feet high in the redwood forest.

In the more open mixed-evergreen and chaparral areas, red-tailed and sharp-shinned hawks are often visible. Turkey vultures may be seen circling the same areas. There are also a number of varieties of humming-birds as well as owls, swallows, great blue heron, doves and warblers, which are all residents of, or visitors to, the park. Many are more often heard than seen.

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## FACILITIES:

Big Basin has a number of camping facilities. There are family sites, group sites, trail camps and tent cabins. All are subject to reservations. Sequoia Group site and family campgrounds have coin operated showers available.

In addition, approximately 80 miles of hiking trails, a Visitors' Center, a Nature Lodge and a large picnic area are located here. Also a campstore, gift shop and snack bar are open seasonally.

Boulder Creek, nine miles south on Highway 236, has the nearest automotive and other service facilities.

For further information, please contact the park headquarters staff, at:

Big Basin Redwoods State Park  
21600 Big Basin Way  
Boulder Creek, California 95006  
(408) 338-8860

To make camping reservations, contact Destinet, at:  
1-800-444-PARK

To make tent cabin reservations, contact Big Basin Tent Cabins, at:  
1-800-874-TENT

"God sent seven signs upon this land of ours  
To teach, by awe, mankind His wondrous powers:  
A river sweeping broadly to the sea;  
A cataract that thunders ceaselessly;  
A mountain peak that towers in heaven's face;  
A chasm deep-sunk toward the nether place;  
A lake that all the wide horizon fills;  
A pleasant vale set gem-like in the hills;  
And, worthy younger brother of all these,  
The great Sequoia, king of all the trees!"

Charles Elmer Jenny

## BIG BASIN REDWOODS State Park Map

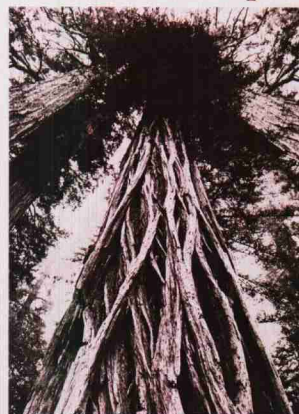


Photo by Alexander Leary



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Mountain Parks Foundation (formerly Santa Cruz Mountain Natural History Association) has been funding educational and interpretive activities in the Santa Cruz mountains since 1973. In cooperation with the California State Park System, the Foundation publishes and distributes park literature, sells books, maps and park brochures, purchases equipment and supplies for interpretive programs in the parks, funds scientific and educational research, and operates the environmental Education Center in Henry Cowell Redwood State Park. Membership in the Foundation is open to all who are interested. For more information, call or write:

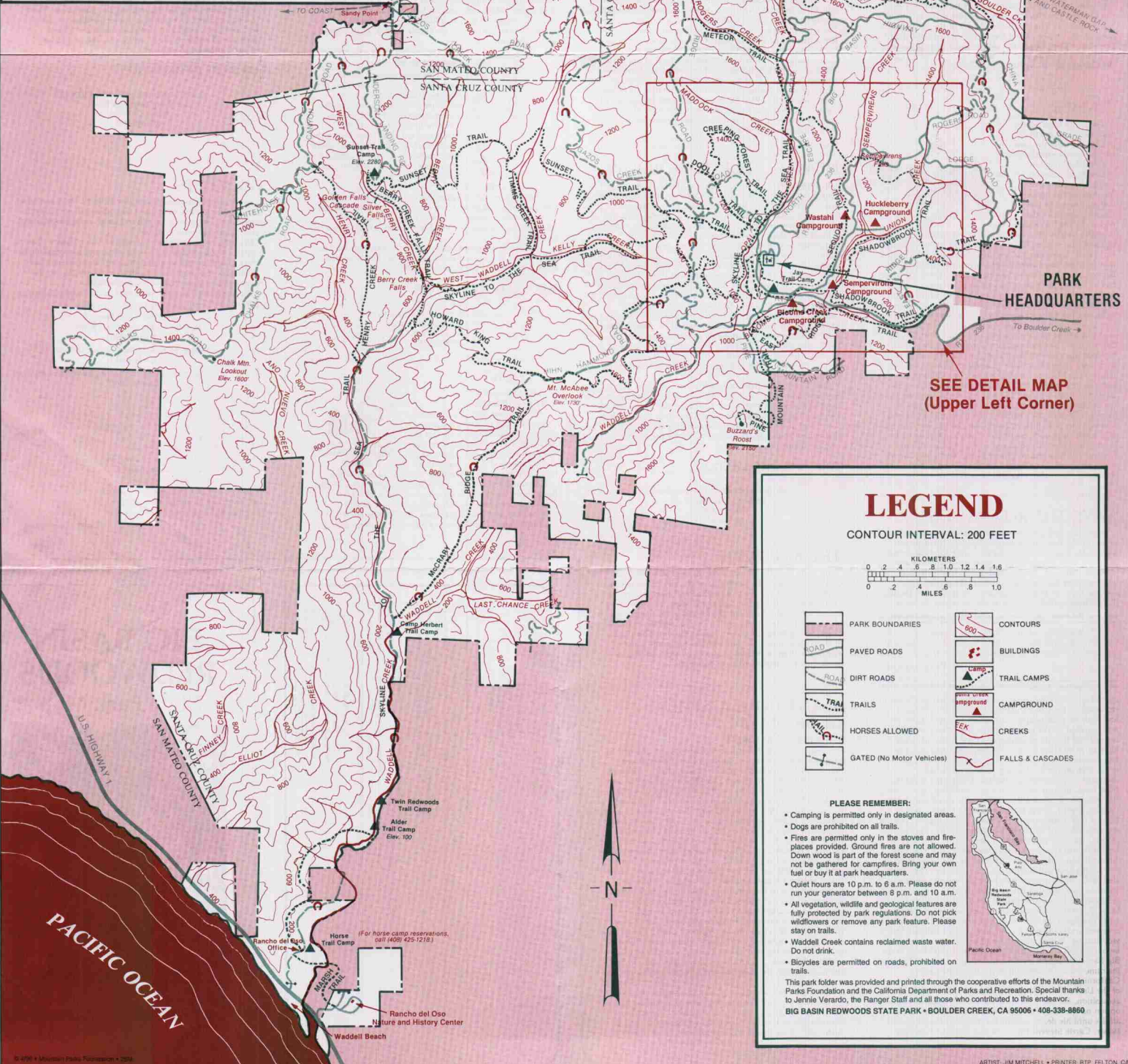
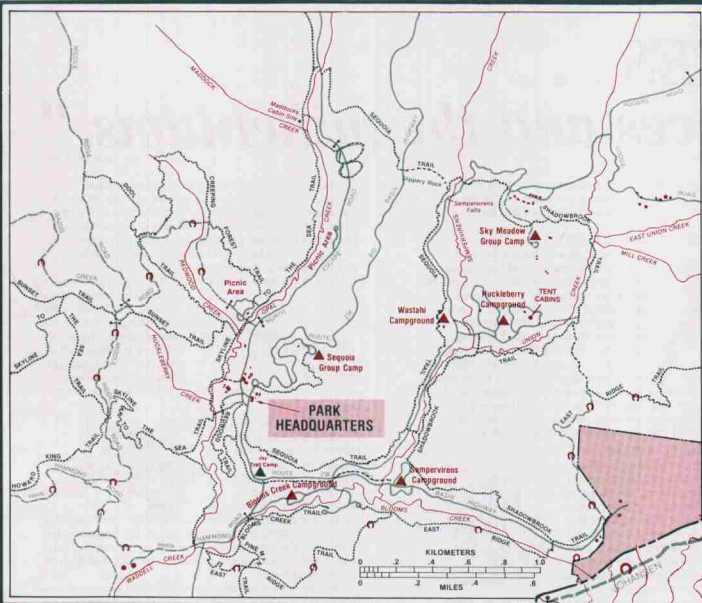
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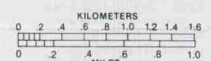
# BIG BASIN REDWOODS

STATE PARK



## LEGEND

CONTOUR INTERVAL: 200 FEET



	PARK BOUNDARIES		CONTOURS
	PAVED ROADS		BUILDINGS
	DIRT ROADS		TRAIL CAMPS
	TRAILS		CAMPGROUND
	HORSES ALLOWED		CREEKS
	GATED (No Motor Vehicles)		FALLS & CASCADES

### PLEASE REMEMBER:

- Camping is permitted only in designated areas.
- Dogs are prohibited on all trails.
- Fires are permitted only in the stoves and fireplaces provided. Ground fires are not allowed. Down wood is part of the forest scene and may not be gathered for campfires. Bring your own fuel or buy it at park headquarters.
- Quiet hours are 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Please do not run your generator between 8 p.m. and 10 a.m.
- All vegetation, wildlife and geological features are fully protected by park regulations. Do not pick wildflowers or remove any park feature. Please stay on trails.
- Waddell Creek contains reclaimed waste water. Do not drink.
- Bicycles are permitted on roads, prohibited on trails.



This park folder was provided and printed through the cooperative efforts of the Mountain Parks Foundation and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Special thanks to Jennie Verardo, the Ranger Staff and all those who contributed to this endeavor.

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